

Statement on the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption

September 16, 2000

Yesterday I joined the leaders of 19 nations in the Western Hemisphere in ratifying the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption.

The Convention establishes a treaty-based regime among members of the Organization of American States (OAS) to combat official corruption. OAS members who have ratified the Convention will have to criminalize acts of corruption if they have not already done so. Most important, they will have to criminalize the bribery of foreign government officials, a practice that punishes honest businesses, undermines economic development, and destroys confidence in law. The United States pressed for this provision, and it is a breakthrough in our effort to persuade other countries to adopt legislation similar to our Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

The Convention will strengthen America's ability to cooperate with, and receive assistance from, countries in the hemisphere in efforts to prevent, investigate, and prosecute corruption, through extradition, mutual legal assistance, and other measures. It will also enhance law enforcement capabilities in other areas, given the links between corruption and organized criminal activity.

This Convention was the first multilateral agreement against bribery to be adopted anywhere in the world. It is a victory for good government, fair competition, and open trade through our hemisphere.

Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Dinner

September 16, 2000

Thank you very much, Chairman Clyburn; dinner chair Eddie Bernice Johnson, my friend of 28 years—and didn't she give a great introduction to the Vice President? You better go on the road, girl. *[Laughter]* Our foundation chair, Eva Clayton, and all the members and former members of the CBC, especially to my friend Bill Clay. We wish you well and Godspeed on your retirement,

and I thank you for 8 years of our good partnership.

To Mrs. Coretta Scott King and all the distinguished citizens in the audience, but especially to the two whom I had the great honor to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Marian Wright Edelman and Reverend Jesse Jackson, thank you for being here with us tonight.

I thank Lou Stokes and Phylicia Rashad and want to join in congratulating the award winners, my friend Arthur Eve, whose son did such a good job working for the Clinton-Gore administration; Kenneth Hill; Rodney Carroll, who has been great on our Welfare to Work program. Tom Joyner, who lets me jaw on his radio program from time to time. Even I never got an eight-page spread in *Ebony*; I don't know about that. *[Laughter]*

To Tavis Smiley and to the family of our friend LeBaron Taylor; Bill Kennard, and Ambassador Sisulu, thank you for what you said about our friend Nelson Mandela. I thank General Reno and Secretary Slater and Secretary Herman and Deputy Attorney General Holder and our SBA Director, Aida Alvarez, and all the people from our White House team who are here, and from the entire administration.

I thought the Vice President gave a great speech, and I'm looking forward to getting rid of that trouble adjective at the beginning of his title in just a couple of months now.

Now, there was nothing subliminal about that. We Democrats don't have subliminal advertising. *[Laughter]* I also want to thank Senator Lieberman, who has been a friend since Hillary and I met him 30 years ago when he was running for the State Senate in New Haven. And I can tell you that if he is the Vice President of this country, you will be very, very proud of him. He has done a great job, and he has been a great friend of mine.

I want to bring you a warm welcome from Hillary. She wishes she could be here tonight, but she's otherwise occupied. They sent the one in our family who is not running for office this year to speak to you tonight.

I've been honored to be at every one of these dinners since I became President. Tonight I came mostly to listen and to clap and to say thanks. Thank you for your friendship,

your leadership, and your support. Thank you for giving me the chance, John Lewis, to walk with you in Selma this year. Thank you, for those of you who went back to Africa with me when we went to Nigeria and Tanzania. Thank you for working with me to reach out to the people of Africa and the Caribbean to try to build their countries through trade.

Thank you, for those of you who helped me to relieve the debt of the poor countries and to increase our fight against AIDS and TB and malaria around the world.

The Vice President said that there are so many people who could say that the CBC covered their back. Covered their back? [Laughter] When they took a torch to me and lit the fire, you brought the buckets and poured the water on it. And I thank you. Thank you.

But mostly, I want to thank you for taking our Nation to higher ground, for standing with Al Gore and me in our simple but profound mission to make sure that everyone counts and everyone has a chance, to make sure that we act as if we all do better when we help each other.

I can't thank you enough for your role in all the good things that have happened in the last 8 years. It's all been recited. I guess what I would like for you to know is that there are a lot of days when I just felt like the troubadour, but other people had to play in the orchestra and even write the songs. And nothing—nothing good that I have achieved would have been possible without the Congressional Black Caucus, our other friends in Congress, and especially Vice President Al Gore. And I thank you all for that.

I just want to say two serious things about the future tonight. The first is that when Al Gore says you ain't seen nothin' yet, I agree with him. We've spent a lot of time in the last 8 years just trying to turn this country around and get it together and get it moving in the right direction. And now, for the first time in our lifetime, we have both prosperity and the absence of serious internal crisis and external threat.

We actually can build the future of our dreams for our kids. We could get rid of child poverty. We could give every child in America the chance at a world-class education for

the first time. We could open the doors of college to all. We could take Social Security and Medicare out there beyond the life of the baby boomers and add that prescription drug benefit.

We could do a lot of things with these unbelievable discoveries in science and technology. But we have to make a decision. And so the second point I want to make is, sometimes it's harder to make a good decision in good times than bad times. I know the people took a chance on me in 1992, but give me a break. The country was in a ditch; it wasn't that much of a chance. [Laughter]

I mean, you know, they—I don't know how many voters went into the polling place and thought, "You know, I don't know if I want to vote for that guy. He's a Governor. President Bush said he was the Governor of a small southern State, and I don't even know where that place is on the map, and he looks too young, and everybody says he's terrible." But we had to change.

Now things are going well, and people are comfortable and confident, and we have options. So it's up to you to make sure that people ask the right question and answer it in this election season, that we say we cannot afford to pass up the chance of a lifetime, maybe the chance of a half a century, to build the future of our dreams for our children.

And there is a lot at stake. You've heard it all tonight, just about, how we're fighting for strong schools and modern classrooms and a higher minimum wage and all the other things. I would like to mention one other thing that hasn't been talked about. We ought to be fighting for an end to delay and discrimination against highly qualified minority candidates for the Federal courts.

This administration has named 62 African-American judges, 3 times the number of the previous two administrations combined, with the highest ratings from the ABA in 40 years. Yet, we know, in spite of that, that women and minority candidates are still much more likely to be delayed or denied.

So even though this is a nonprofit organization, I can ask you to remember Judge Ronnie White, the first African-American on the Missouri Supreme Court, denied on the party-line vote. The fourth circuit, with the largest African-American population in the

country, never had an African-American judge. Last year I told you I nominated James Wynn, a distinguished judge from North Carolina. After 400 days, with his senior Senator still standing in the courthouse door, the Senate hasn't found one day to give Judge Wynn even a hearing.

This year I nominated Roger Gregory of Virginia, the first man in his family to finish high school, a teacher at Virginia State University, where his mother once worked as a maid, a highly respected litigator with the support of his Republican and his Democratic Senator from Virginia. But so far, we're still waiting for him to get a hearing. And then there's Kathleen McCree Lewis in Michigan and others all across this country.

So once again, I ask the Senate to do the right thing and quit closing the door on people who are qualified to serve.

Now, they say I can't ask you to vote for anybody, but I will say this. If you want no more delay and denial of justice, it would help if you had Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and Senators like the First Lady.

If you want a tax code that helps working families with child care, long-term care, and access to college education, it would help if you had Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and Charlie Rangel as the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

If you want strong civil rights and equal rights laws and you want them enforced, it would really help if you had Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and you made John Conyers the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

If you want the intelligence policy of this country to reflect genuine intelligence—[laughter]—it would help if you had Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and Julian Dixon as the chairman of the Intelligence Committee.

But I will say again, sometimes it is harder to make good decisions in good times than bad times. Sometimes it's easier to think of some little thing you've got to quibble about. Remember the African proverb: "Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." My friends, we've got to be skillful sailors.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Toni Morrison once said I was the first black President this country ever had. [Laughter] And I would rather have that than a Nobel Prize, and I'll tell you why. Because some-

where, in the deep and lost threads of my own memory, are the roots of understanding of what you have known. Somewhere, there was a deep longing to share the fate of the people who had been left out and left behind, sometimes brutalized, and too often ignored or forgotten.

I don't exactly know who all I have to thank for that. But I'm quite sure I don't deserve any credit for it, because whatever I did, I really felt I had no other choice.

I want you to remember that I had a partner that felt the same way, that I believe he will be one of the great Presidents this country ever had, and that for the rest of my days, no matter what—no matter what—I will always be there for you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Representative James E. Clyburn, chair, Congressional Black Caucus; former Representative Louis Stokes and actress Phylicia Rashad, dinner masters of ceremony; Representatives Eva M. Clayton, chair, and William (Bill) Clay and Julian C. Dixon, board members, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation; Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; New York State Deputy Assembly Speaker Arthur O. Eve and his son, former Special Assistant to the President for Political Affairs Eric V. Eve; Kenneth Hill, executive director, Detroit Area Pre-College Engineering Program, Inc.; Rodney Carroll, chief operating officer, Welfare to Work Partnership; radio morning show host Tom Joyner; talk show host Tavis Smiley; Ambassador Sheila Sisulu and former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; and author Toni Morrison.

Remarks at a Brunch for Hillary Clinton in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

September 17, 2000

Thank you very much. I was telling Ed that I left the Black Caucus dinner last night about 12:15—the Congressional Black Caucus—I was hoping that I would be *compos mentis* by the time I was introduced to speak, and you gave me such a warm welcome, I'm about to wake up. [Laughter]